

INDIVIDUAL DUTY

RESPECTING THE

CONVERSION OF THE WORLD.

Individual Duty respecting the Conversion of the World.

A DISCOURSE

PREACHED BEFORE, AND BY APPOINTMENT OF, THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

IN ROCHESTER, NEW YORK, MAY 22^d, 1860,

ON BEHALF OF THE

BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS.

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SERMON.

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"—ACTS 9: 6.

It has become an established custom, dating back several years, to have a discourse preached, annually, on behalf of each of the Boards of our church, during the sessions of the General Assembly. By the appointment of the last General Assembly, I appear before you, this evening, on behalf of the Board of Foreign Missions.

To the church at large is committed, by its Divine Head, the duty of evangelizing the world. It is generally conceded, that the Saviour's last command: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"—though spoken, originally, to "the eleven," was intended for the whole body of his followers, in that and in each succeeding generation. As one among the many families of the church universal, we, as a denomination, so regard it.

There are different and somewhat conflicting theories entertained by individuals in our own and in other denominations, respecting the ultimate results which shall attend the publication of the gospel to the nations; whether the entire world, in any given generation, shall ever be converted to Christ; whether, indeed, this was the Saviour's design; and, if so, whether it is to be accomplished by the present system of ordinary means, or whether He who is King in Zion is to inaugurate some extraordinary measures—some new dispensation—under his personal superintendence, or otherwise, by which to compass the grand design of his purposes, whatever it may be. But with these theories, or any others of a kindred nature, entertained upon this general subject, we, at present, have nothing to do. It is sufficient to know, and to assume, on this occasion, and for my present purpose, that, as a denomination, in our organic action, whether through our General Assemblies, our Boards, or other official agencies, we by common consent regard it

as the grand mission of the church militant to "preach the gospel to every creature." And it is perhaps matter for devout thanksgiving, that, whatever may be the views of individuals touching these questions—in a church which grants full liberty of opinion upon them—the church, as such, and those who are officially acting for her in this work, have stood aloof from these opinions, and are devoted to labors for a practical obedience to Christ's command, in giving the gospel to all classes and people, at home and abroad.

Our Board of Foreign Missions is one of the several organizations through which our church is operating in the discharge of this comprehensive duty. It is not the church, nor a part of the church; neither is it an organic power, either within or without the church, coördinate, subordinate, or superior. It is but the agent of the church, through which the whole body, one and indivisible, is acting in the supervision of one department of the business essential to accomplish the church's great mission on earth, and without which the body at large could not act in unity.

Its particular sphere of operation is the heathen world. It receives and disburses the funds of the church; it accepts her ministers and other qualified helpers, and designates their field of labor; it erects the house of God for worship, and opens the school for the young; it translates, publishes, and circulates the Scriptures; it is the medium of communication between the church and her sons and daughters, in their arduous and self-denying labors; and, in general, it has committed to its care all that is deemed essential to the efficient management of the details of that most difficult of all the church's enterprises, the evangelization of the heathen. In all this, however, we recognize the action of the church only.

And so of all the Boards of the Church; so of her Theological Seminaries; so of every organization created by her for the common end: they are but her essential agencies, through which she is doing her own work, in obedience to her Master's will. Through them all, each in its allotted sphere, we behold the church alone acting in harmony and in unity.

The machinery which the church has thus set in motion, in these several departments, may be deemed all-sufficient for its specific purpose, and, as a whole, may be regarded as complete. Some parts of it are the result of the wisdom of later years; and as the generations roll on, other parts may be added, or its present organizations modified, or some of them dispensed with. But all, probably, that is deemed essential

at present, has been put into operation. As a church, we are fully equipped for our work.*

But with all these efficient agencies, with our church, in its national aspect, extending her Presbyteries and Synods into every State and Territory of our Union, and commanding the respect of the world; with her twenty-five hundred ministers, her thirty-five hundred pulpits, her three hundred licentiates, and large army of colporteurs, preaching and circulating the word of life; with her six theological seminaries, and her five hundred candidates; with her three hundred foreign missionaries and their assistants, occupying stations in so many countries of the heathen world, among our Indian tribes, and even in the heart of Europe: with all these varied appliances, at home and abroad, directed by our highest wisdom, and pushed forward by our mightiest energies, we yet recognize all and every one as utterly vain, as hopelessly imbecile, and nothing worth, without a baptism of the Holy Spirit.

In this particular, as a church, we assume nothing but what we grant to others; but we do especially make it a prominent element of our teachings, in the pulpit and by the way, in our seminaries and through the press, that, in all our labors for the world's salvation, in order to the least success, it is not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts!

We also recognize it as a cardinal principle of duty in the economy of the gospel, that, in order to the descent of the Holy Spirit in power to bless, prayer must be offered continually. We "pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest," and to make the gospel they preach "the power of God unto salvation." Our people are fully instructed in this, and there is, probably, not a man or woman in the church, who prays at all, who does not urge these and similar petitions—who does not esteem it a duty to pray, without ceasing, "Thy kingdom come!"

In another matter of obvious duty, most essential in giving the gospel to the world, we are coming to learn and discharge our obligations better than we have been accustomed to do. Alms-giving, though not recognized by some as technically an act of worship, is admitted by all to be an indispensable Christian duty. To aid in supporting the gospel where we stately worship; to contribute to send it to the heathen, and

* This entire discourse was written before the meeting of the Assembly. Some of the preceding paragraphs were omitted in its delivery, owing to the discussion then pending in the Assembly respecting the reorganization of the Boards. It is not deemed essential, however, that they should be omitted in the publication.

to the destitute at home; to give of our substance to sustain all the institutions and agencies of the church for filling the whole earth with the knowledge of salvation; to do this regularly, habitually, and from principle, in measure according to our ability as God has blessed us, and to do it voluntarily, through the constituted authorities of the church, without any extraneous agencies, is now generally regarded as a manifest duty—as clearly so as to pray, or to lead a holy life. And, although as a church, with our numbers, our wealth, and our high social and ecclesiastical position, we fall far below the demands of the gospel—when we consider the millions on millions who are perishing for the bread of life, and who might be reached immediately, if the alms of the church were equal to her easy ability—yet it is especially gratifying to see her contributions to every cause steadily increasing, and to see some of her most important institutions, which have struggled with poverty for a whole generation, and some of later origin, becoming fully endowed and liberally equipped for their work. These things we regard, not as proof that we have more benevolence than our fathers, but as the result of more faithful instruction, by the pulpit and the press, elucidating more clearly to the minds of the people that this is an essential outgrowth of a genuine Christian life.

What lack we yet? we may inquire; but with a more devout and humble spirit than that which prompted a similar inquiry of our Saviour. Is there anything *more* which is *especially* necessary for us to do, in order that our power as a church may be *more felt* in our efforts to give the gospel to all men?

We recognize, in the grand mission of the church to give the gospel to the world, our *prime duty*. Our equipments for the work are ample; we are carrying forward all needed organic agencies; we are giving our money; we believe in the essential power of the Spirit of God to bring forth any fruit; and for his blessing, prayer is universally offered. On all these points our people are well instructed; these duties are unquestioned, and to some good degree are exemplified. What more is demanded of us? What lack we yet?

We lack many things; we come short in all. But there is one radical Christian duty, in reference to bringing the multitudes to Christ, both at home and abroad, touching the discharge of which the great mass that compose the church are sadly wanting, as I read the Scriptures and observe the common exhibitions of the Christian life. And what is true of our own church is true of all others. It is to the statement, the proof, and the illustration of this duty, that I ask your attention; a duty

which seems to be enjoined as essential to the perfection of that system of subordinate means ordained in wisdom for bringing the gospel directly to bear, individually, upon all men; a duty without the discharge of which all other measures for this specific end will be feeble; and a duty which, were it fully and judiciously met by the whole body of Christ's people, would result in speedily changing the spiritual condition of the church and of the world.

It is this: THE OBLIGATION IMPOSED BY THE SAVIOUR UPON ALL THE MEMBERS OF HIS CHURCH, WITHOUT EXCEPTION, TO BE ACTIVE LABORERS IN HIS VINEYARD; that is to say, to make such a consecration of themselves to Christ, as shall lead to direct, personal, continuous exertions, in some specific work or works, each in the sphere allotted by Providence, and according to the ability which God giveth, in edifying the body of Christ, and tending to bring sinners to repentance.

I am quite well aware, that in the statement of such a proposition for discussion in such a presence as the General Assembly, I may encounter, in some minds, at least, a state of feeling not the most favorable for its candid examination. By some it may be regarded as a duty of secondary or trivial importance; by some as demanding no special attention at the present time; by others, as calculated to foster a spirit, of which they are apprehensive the present day already too much partakes, tending to subvert the authority of the rulers of Christ's kingdom, by assigning to the lay element, to the people at large, business with which they have no concern; and by others still, if we may judge from the habits and life of the great majority in any particular church, as being only the duty of the officers of the church, or perhaps of some few others in addition, but as being, in respect to themselves at least, no duty at all, as involving no obligation whatever, binding upon their consciences, and enforced by the gospel. But this very chaos of opinion only reveals the more clearly that the subject needs examination.

The latent scepticism which I have intimated to exist extensively in reference to this obligation, may be attributed, in great part, to the infrequency with which it has been urged upon the attention of the people from the pulpit, as compared with other branches of Christian duty. I have rarely heard it made the subject for full discussion in a sermon, or touched upon at all, except incidentally. Nor is it easy to find, with few exceptions, among many volumes of published sermons I have examined, anything more than casual allusions to it; and even then it is commonly presented as a privilege rather than a duty; while, in the teachings of Christ and his apostles, it is more largely dwelt upon,

illustrated and enforced, than almost any other topic of Christian duty.

The service involved in the proposition I have laid down, is required for the double purpose of developing and strengthening the Christian graces of the individual concerned, and of bringing others to the saving knowledge of the truth ; and for both these ends it is as clearly enjoined as any other obligation binding the individual, or the church as a whole. It is, indeed, among the plainest, the fullest, the most frequently reiterated and amply illustrated teachings of the whole word of God. Its true spirit, as it wells up from the depths of the Christian heart, is poured out in the prayer of our text, as it comes forth upon the lips of the subdued persecutor of Christ, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Let us, then, examine this proposition in the light of the Scriptures—as to the *reality* of the duty involved in it ; the *nature* of the service required ; the *abuses* against which it should be guarded ; and the *results* likely to flow from its proper discharge by the whole body of Christ, in their bearing upon the conversion of the world.

As to the text, but little need be said. It no doubt indicates the time of Saul's conversion ; and this prayer thus becomes the natural outgushing of his new-born soul. But it is more than this. It contains a suggestive truth. It is a representative experience. It embodies a lesson for our instruction ; a sentiment which should ever be found in every Christian heart, and the sincerity of which should be evinced in every Christian life. This inquiry of Saul covers the whole field of Christian duty, and shows a readiness for any service. It was the first aspiration of his Christian experience. And we can perhaps have no surer single item of evidence that his conversion was genuine, than this—that he desired to go immediately to work in the Lord's vineyard, and sought to be directed in the service by the Master thereof. If this position be tenable, then what better single species of evidence can we show for a genuine Christian experience, in any case, and during any period of the Christian life, than the desire expressed through fervent prayer, and by other means of inquiry, to know what the Lord our Saviour would have us do, and the determination to do his will when known? Indeed, the entertaining of this inquiry, sincerely and with humility, and the purpose, exemplified in action, to submit to the will of God, and to do his will, go largely toward making up that which pre-eminently marks the soul as "born of God," in any and in all Christians. As the essence of sin consists in ignoring and contravening the

will of God, so the essence of gospel piety consists in recognizing the elements and authority of his will, and in spiritual obedience to it.

Of the many Christian duties which obedience to God's will involves, our attention at present is directed to but one, yet a chief one, that already stated: *the obligation imposed by the Saviour upon all the members of his church, without exception, to be active laborers in his vineyard.*

We are to inquire,

I. As to the REALITY of the duty involved in this proposition.

The proof for this is found,

1. In the *command* which our Lord gave, just before his ascension, in the words, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

I have already assumed, as generally conceded by all branches of the church, that this command was intended for, and was announced to "the eleven" as the representatives of, the whole body of Christ's followers, in that and in each succeeding generation. Whatever, therefore, of obligation is found in this command, rests upon the church at large, and of necessity a portion of this obligation rests upon every member. Whatever is required by it, in the training, equipping, sending out, and maintaining of ministers and other laborers at home, and missionaries of every grade abroad; whatever is needed to translate and publish the Scriptures in all the dialects of the earth, and to build churches and schools and maintain them; and whatever is needed in order to do any and all other things to give efficiency to the gospel, as authorized by it for the conversion of the world, is binding upon each and every member of the church, to the extent of each one's ability. These obligations follow, of necessity, if the command was intended for the church at large.

What, indeed, is the scriptural object of the church's organization, and of its maintenance before the world, as a public, visible body? Is it for the sanctification and salvation of its members merely? Is it not that it may make aggression upon the kingdom of Satan? Is not this everywhere set forth as the grand idea of the church's duty—and of the vital essence and genius of Christianity—to endeavor, by all ordained means, to bless mankind and save the world from sin and misery? And if this is true of the *system* of religion, as such, and of the church, as an instrumentality intended to *illustrate* it, does it not follow that this theory demands that it should be true of the aim, and labors, and life of each one whose membership contributes to make up the church?

What is the ultimate end, indeed, for which any individual is brought into the church, and continued in it (so far as his earthly career is concerned) but this: not merely that he, as an individual, may be sanctified and fitted for heaven, but that he may *render a life of service to Christ*? We shall see this more clearly as we proceed.

2. Many of the *similes* used by the Saviour to represent the church, and his teachings connected therewith, show the obligation in question.

(1.) The parable of the "laborers in the vineyard," enforces this duty. "The kingdom of heaven," says Christ, "is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard." It is, for my purpose, wholly unimportant which of the many theories of interpretation applied to some of the particulars of this parable be taken as the true one, or whether any of them be correct. All agree substantially in this, that "the kingdom of heaven" here means the church, the "laborers" in the vineyard, represent Christ's people at large, and the "householder," Christ, as making a call upon them for service. Whatsoever, therefore, of *duty* is enjoined in this parable, is binding upon all Christians, for Christ is speaking of his disciples indiscriminately, and not of any class or order in the church. Those sent into the vineyard, were sent for the one purpose of laboring in it; and while some entered at the sixth hour, others at the ninth, and others at the eleventh, the duty of each was to labor from the time he entered to the end of the day, which represents the period of human life.

Two things, then, upon the 'only point now under consideration, are here set forth: First, that *all Christians* are designated as "laborers" in the Lord's spiritual vineyard, and are called into it for the specific purpose of rendering an *active service*. Second, that the *term* for which they are called to labor, is *the whole time of their probation*, after entering the vineyard.

(2.) The same general obligation is enforced in the parable of the "pounds," and also in that of the "talents." Here, again, those whom Christ addressed, represent, not any order in the church, but the whole body of his followers. Christ has bestowed upon them all they possess—their powers of body and mind, their time, influence, and property—all of which are included under the designation of "the pounds," and "the talents;" and what he demands is this: that they shall devote all they are and have to his service; that all shall be put to the most productive use, that he may have the avails of all when he shall call for a reckoning. We know what that reckoning is to be. It is foreshadowed in the parable. He who had been faithful was commended and reward-

ed; he who had been careless, or who had wasted his endowment, as well as he who had been careful, and laid up his pound in a napkin, and had done nothing, was condemned. The obligation in each case was graduated according to the ability possessed, and the reward or condemnation according to the use or abuse of that ability.

While, therefore, the parable of the "laborers in the vineyard" enforces the duty under consideration upon all Christians to labor *from the time they enter the church to the end of life*, the parables of "the pounds" and of "the talents," respectively, are intended to show to all Christians, in addition to this, that in this service *their whole energies and possessions* must be enlisted.

In none of these parables is the duty under consideration directly dwelt upon, but in each the duty is assumed to exist; while the motive, in the "reward" promised, and the manner of bestowing it, are the things directly illustrated.*

3. Besides these similes of the church, of which I have given a specimen as illustrating Christian duty, the same general obligation is seen in the many *direct injunctions* to Christians, found everywhere in the New Testament.

Paul directs Titus about preaching, thus: "I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to *maintain good works*." Christ, it is said, "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, *zealous of good works*." "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*." "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, *being fruitful in every good work*." "And God is able to make all *grace abound toward you, that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work*." "I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting. In like manner, also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but, which becometh women professing godliness, *with good works*." "Let not a widow be taken into the number, under three-score years old, having been the wife of one man, *well reported of for good works*." Dorcas was one thus "well reported of," for it is written that "this woman was *full of good works and almsdeeds* which she did."

It is upon these specific injunctions, found everywhere, that such ex-

* Vide "Trench on the Parables."

hortations as these are based: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised; and let us consider one another *to provoke unto love and good works.*" "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may, *by your good works* which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." "Let your light so shine before men, *that they may see your good works*, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, *always abounding in the work of the Lord*, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Now, what are we to understand by this language, found so frequently in the scriptures, and addressed to all Christians indiscriminately? What is meant by the duty here enjoined upon all—to be "zealous of good works"—and the exhibition of which, James says, is the proof that faith is genuine? Is it merely a cultivation of personal holiness, and fitting one's own soul for heaven, with which so many seem to be entirely content? Or, is it something beyond this?—something directly to be done for the good of others?—some specific, visible, tangible, outward acts of personal service, for the spiritual and temporal welfare of our brethren in the church, and the perishing in the world?

To this it must be answered, that these passages enjoin a service due to others.

(1.) We infer this necessarily from the meaning of the terms. The original phrase here rendered "good work," and "good works," is never, we believe, used in the epistles to designate the moral state of the soul, or the moral character of the life, or our duties in relation thereto. It is never applied to man's subjective state, but is always used with reference to something outward, which he does, or acts upon. The primary meaning of "work," as here used, is *an action, a performance, a deed, an occupation, a trade, a task, a business*, etc. This throws light upon the real meaning of the injunction that all Christians should be "zealous of good works," and upon the design in their regeneration, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works." It is their *occupation, task, trade, business*, to be engaged in good deeds and labors in the cause of Christ; that for which they were redeemed, that for which they are preserved in life, to devote themselves "a living sacrifice" to promote the present welfare and eternal salvation of their fellow-men.

(2.) This is, moreover, evidently the meaning of this language, from what is said of the reward of the righteous in the heavenly state. Every one is to be rewarded "according to his works;" not as meritorious, and

therefore entitling one to reward, but they will indicate the measure or degree of the reward, to be bestowed for Christ's sake. This principle is many times directly stated in scripture, and is fully illustrated in our Saviour's parables. Now, the "works," according to which we are to be rewarded, must be something besides personal conformity of heart and life to Christ. Each soul, on entering heaven, will be perfect in holiness. No one can be more than this. All, then, as to personal holiness, will then and there be equal, "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." Paul aimed only to present in the great day, "every man perfect in Christ Jesus." If, then, personal conformity to Christ be the measure of reward, all will be rewarded alike. But all are not to be rewarded alike. This is universally conceded. The "works," then, "according to" which men are to be rewarded, must be something different from personal holiness. They must mean *service* directly rendered for the good of *others*.

The doctrine, then, is this: He who does the most for the good of his fellow-men, and especially for their conversion and sanctification and for stimulating them to perform like "good works," shall receive the highest reward in glory; and thus every one finally saved, shall be rewarded just "according to" the amount of good he does for the world's conquest to Christ. This agrees precisely with the words of the prophet: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever."

4. The service upon which we are insisting is further illustrated by the many *incidental references* to Christian duty with which the scriptures abound.

To give a bare specimen: "Brethren," says James, addressing all believers, "if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, [that is, reclaim him from errors of either doctrine or practice, into which he may have fallen,] let him know that he which converteth [reclaimeth] the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." The duty is here assumed to be binding; only the motive is presented for its performance. "But ye, brethren," says Paul, "be not weary in well-doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet, count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."

Can anything more clearly teach the duty of Christians toward their brethren in the church? Similar scriptures might be indefinitely multiplied, showing the duties which they owe one to another. Nor is there

anything here of a local bearing. These are duties for all times and places. They are not enjoined upon officers of the church in distinction from others, as the connection plainly shows, but upon every member.

Observe, also, what arises out of the very nature of Christian fellowship. The church is a "family," a brotherhood; its members are "children" of a common Father, through a common Saviour, "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty," by virtue of union with Christ; "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." All this would fairly imply the duty of watching over the interests, and of being very tender of the reputation, of one another in the church of God. Do we not all feel the most lively interest in every member of our households?—in the life, health, education, habits, morals, reputation, and character of our own families? This is natural and universal. He who would be indifferent to, or reckless of, any of these interests would be deemed a monster. And yet, this is the simile for the church of Christ. From this very consideration, therefore, arise the strongest obligations among Christians, touching everything which can affect the spiritual brotherhood.

Many of these incidental references to Christian duty, with which the scriptures are filled, show that it is as clearly incumbent on the people of God to do good to men of the world, as to members of the church. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men." "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you." Indeed, no attentive reader of the scriptures can have failed to discover, that they abound in incidental allusions showing it to be the duty of all Christians, in all times and places, to manifest a lively interest in the spiritual welfare of all classes of men, to pray and labor for their salvation.

5. Another proof of this general obligation, as announced in the proposition under consideration, is found in *the example of Christ*.

This, assuredly, is for all Christians, for all men. Peter says Christ hath left us "an example that we should follow his steps." He is speaking of believers generally.

What, then, was Christ's example? What was it touching the point under consideration? Was he not wholly given to the work of doing spiritual good to mankind?—even subordinating all he did for man's temporal good to the higher claims of the spiritual?—embracing every

opportunity, in private, in the family, in the street, in the market-place, on shipboard, on the mountain-side, in the hamlet, and the city, just as truly as in the synagogue and in the temple? In the zeal he manifested for the spiritual good of the church, not only, but of sinners of every grade, the abandoned and the outcast, (and not in his public ministry,) but everywhere and at all times, in private, is he not an example for every Christian?

It is the universally accepted doctrine of the church, in all its branches, that the example of Christ is for all his people, indeed for all mankind. But his example in what? Have we any warrant in scripture for saying that he is an example in *holiness* for all his people, and yet *not* an example in *zeal* and *labors for men's salvation*, except to the ministry?—that, in heart, and in simple, personal conformity to God's commands, he is an example, and yet that he is not an example the moment the power of grace in the Christian soul is to be brought out and made to bear upon a wicked world for its enlightenment, reproof, conviction, and salvation?—that, in letting our “light shine before men,” that they may see our “good works,” and be led thereby to glorify our Father in heaven, we are not bound to imitate him who is “the light of the world?” What warrant have we in scripture for this distinction? What right have we to deny the full obligation of Christ's example in its most effective form for good? What right have we to cut that example in twain, and while revering one part of it trample the other in the dust?

If, then, Christ's example in this respect is for all Christians, it beautifully illustrates the meaning of the specific precepts I have cited, and powerfully enforces their obligation.

6. Another thing which at least fully confirms all the other items of proof upon this general obligation, is *the practice of the primitive Christians*.

In reading the earliest history of the church, as found in the Acts of the Apostles, and incidentally alluded to in the epistles, nothing is more plain upon the whole surface of that history than this: that all Christ's followers, men and women alike, were actively engaged in specific labors for spreading the gospel, making converts from the world, and building up the church.

Going back to the day of Pentecost, we find the whole body of the disciples assembled. “They were all of one accord in one place,” waiting at Jerusalem as they had been bidden to do, for the fulfilment of the promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. After Peter's ser-

mon, when three thousand were added to the church, having received the baptism of the Spirit, they literally consecrated all to Christ,—themselves and their possessions. This fact is twice mentioned, once at the close of the second, and again at the close of the fourth chapter.

The next notice we have of the action of the church at large, bearing upon the present point, is what is said of the labors of the disciples as a body in directly preaching Christ to the perishing multitudes. This was immediately after a great persecution, beginning with the death of Stephen. It is said: "There was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and *they were all scattered abroad* throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, *except the apostles.*" Then, after speaking of Stephen's burial and Saul's havoc, it is said: "Therefore, [in consequence of this persecution and dispersion] they that were scattered abroad, [which were all the church, except the apostles,] *went every where preaching the word.*"

Now, we do not suppose this can mean, that the whole church were ordained ministers,—men, women, and all; but this, rather,—that each and every disciple, out of a full heart, burdened with the love of Christ and of souls, "went everywhere preaching the word," in the sense here meant, without any ordination; or, in other words, told the story of the cross, and exhorted men to repentance, each in his or her own way, to one or many, as opportunities were afforded—just as private members of the church may now do, and ought to do, without infringing any proper ecclesiastical authority. This account is found in the eighth chapter of the Acts.

It was deemed worthy to note the *results* of this "preaching of the word" by the people, and we find the account in the eleventh chapter, and learn that these private preachers were wonderfully successful. It is said: "Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, *preaching the word* to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, *spoke* unto the Grecians, *preaching* the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them; *and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.*" It is said, immediately after this, that "tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem;" and then "they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch," to superintend the work thus begun. But these *conversions*, so far as anything which appears in the record is concerned, took place under the labors of *private* Christians.

Now, while we do not regard the mere example of what occurred in the early church, as of itself necessarily binding upon the church now, in the sense of a "Thus saith the Lord," yet this case contains important instruction for the church at the present day. It shows us what the early Christians deemed to be the true spirit of the gospel, what it impelled them to do,—to go "everywhere" laboring for Christ in the conversion of souls. This lesson comes from those who lived in the age of Christ and the apostles. Their work was approved and eminently blessed of God. So may Christians now, if engaged in the same labors, rely upon the same approval and blessing.

And besides these more marked and general labors, there are many *cases of individual zeal* which the scriptures record with approval, and which we may regard as an example for all. John the Baptist proclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Andrew heard this, and immediately "followed Jesus," embracing him as the Messiah. He then at once sought his own brother, Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. *And he brought him to Jesus*"—thus commencing the work of bringing souls to Christ on the very day when he himself found him. On the next day, Jesus found Philip, and called him into his service, saying to him, "Follow me." No sooner did Philip hear the call than he obeyed, and no sooner did he obey than he began to call others to Christ. He sought Nathanael, and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." After a little parleying, Nathanael became a convert, and followed Christ. These new converts were animated with the same spirit as Saul, when, at the moment of his conversion he inquired, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" They deemed it their prime duty immediately to seek out the perishing and bring them to the Saviour.

And so of the woman of Samaria. As soon as she was convinced that she had found the Messiah, she "went her way into the city," and proclaimed her discovery to the people. That simple announcement God owned and blessed, for he made it the means of conversion, in a direct train of events, to a multitude of souls; for it is written, "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman." They then invited him to their city, "and he abode there two days; and many more believed because of his own word, and said, Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the world."

And is it not written in the whole history of the church since the apostolic age, that whenever and wherever Christians have thus devoted themselves, in the spirit of the primitive disciples, God has greatly blessed their labors in the salvation of men? There are many biographies, familiar to not a few in the church, showing that all along in the line of her history, such labors have been crowned with the most signal success. In the wonderful revivals of the last century, in England and Scotland, and in those of the present century in our own country—in indeed in every extensive revival of religion—these labors of private Christians have been largely instrumental in the good fruits seen.

Now, it would seem that the main proposition I have laid down is fully sustained by the word of God—that *an obligation has been imposed by the Saviour upon all the members of his church, without exception, to be active laborers in his vineyard*. I regard the evidence adduced as showing most conclusively that it is the duty of all Christ's people to make this consecration of themselves to his service.

And yet, *is this* the type of the piety of our day? Is the church, in all its branches, and by all its members, thus devoted? On the contrary, is it not true, that by far the larger portion of our members, and of professed Christians everywhere, are not at all engaged in such labors, or in any labors whatever, of a personal nature, for enlarging Zion and bringing the world to Christ?—content with attending upon the regular ordinances of the gospel, and to sit, Sabbath after Sabbath, and year after year, as mere recipients of God's truth and grace; as vessels to be filled by the services of the ministry for no other end than that they may be filled?—content to look after their own salvation, and even that, feebly, we fear, with no more concern about the world at large than if it were already saved, or irrecoverably lost?

Is not this, most clearly, the type of our general Christianity? And is it not, just as clearly, the very opposite of that set forth in the scriptures? If we find, here and there, a private Christian fully devoted to the work of saving men, following approved examples of ancient and modern times, does it not often excite observation from its uncommonness, and perhaps occasion a fear lest he should go too fast or too far, while in truth even he may be but a feeble representation of what all, in zeal, at least, should become?

How shall we account for this almost universal exhibition of the church's piety, on any better ground than that there is a wide-spread scepticism as to the *reality* of any such obligation resting upon the membership of the church at large, and that it is upon only a privileged few,

with peculiar endowments for the work, that Christ has laid this responsibility? And how shall we account for this, again, but upon the supposition that the ministry, generally, have not as fully opened up this duty to the consideration of the people, as they have most other duties? That they have not, I verily believe; and that there does exist a very prevalent feeling among the people, that they are not, one and all, authoritatively called to such labors, we may all know if we will. It is difficult to account for the well-nigh universal neglect of such duties on any other hypothesis consistent with the church's piety.

This brings me to speak.

II. Of the NATURE of the service involved in this general obligation.

The inquiry may arise in some minds,—Admitting that those which have been mentioned are Christian duties, binding upon every member of the church, do they stand upon the *same plane* of authority and obligation as other Christian duties? Is it a duty in the same sense, and to the same degree obligatory, for a Christian to devote himself to doing spiritual good to the church and to the unconverted, as it is to repent of sin, to pray, and to lead a holy life? To this I answer, I can see no difference. The scriptures recognize no difference. All clearly-defined duties stand on the same level as to their binding authority. If it *be* a Christian duty to warn, reprove, comfort, edify, and encourage the body of Christ, and to exhort the unconverted to turn to Christ for salvation, then these are as obligatory as any other duties.

Is it further inquired, How shall I set about this arduous work? All Christians should engage in this service, as time, opportunity, and their means of influence for good may enable them, being guided by a wise discretion and prudence and a knowledge of their own capabilities, evincing just that common sense and improving that experience which they bring so effectively to bear upon all the practical affairs of life. If there be such a spirit as prompted the prayer of the text, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" there will be little difficulty in finding the path of duty. Such an inquiry will indicate that the mind is ever open to learn, from God's word, and providence, and spirit, from the ministry and other sources, what the will of the Lord is. It will indicate a state of mind always inquiring, and a state of the conduct always doing, as each advancing day and period of life may bring up the successive, continuous train of its duties.

What multitudes who are now engaged in no service for Christ, might give instruction in Bible-classes and in the Sabbath-school, or seek out

uncared-for children and youth and bring them in that others might instruct them! Who cannot visit the lanes and alleys, the garrets and cellars, of our cities, with the Bible, the tract, the religious book, and show to the dwellers therein that they care for their souls? Who cannot visit the shipyards, the wharves, the railway depots, the canal stations, the street corners, the hotels, the coffee-houses, and other lounging places of the young and the middle-aged, and invite the stranger and the outcast to the house of God and the place of prayer? What man or woman is there in the church who cannot engage in some part of these "good works" habitually? All that is required is a *heart* for the duty. If you truly love Christ, should you not show your love by this service? It may require self-denial, but the Master has said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me; for whosoever will save his life shall lose it." In what Dr. Chalmers calls "these days of silken professorship," we need to engage in these labors, lest we forget that self-denial is a term of discipleship.

If the main proposition of this discourse be true, then this service becomes, in some sort, a test of Christian character; as truly so, as our attention to or neglect of prayer, alms-giving, Sabbath worship, or any other plain duty. And *no one* can be excused in reference to this, who cannot plead exemption from every other Christian obligation. Each one has some power for good, at least "one talent" for this service, and he will be held responsible for the proper use of that. In view, therefore, of a happy death-bed, an acquittal at the judgment, and a welcome into heaven with the souls they may save, all Christians should heartily engage in this service!

But it may be asked,—If all are thus to become "laborers in the vineyard," will not this bring disorder into the church, and will not the plans and efforts of so many come into conflict?

This leads me to speak,

III. Of the ABUSES against which this service should be guarded.

The house of God is a house of order, and not of confusion. If it be the duty of all to be actively engaged in the service of Christ, as herein pointed out, there is a way in which this can be done, without bringing distraction into the church, or subverting any lawful authority.

1. The *officers of the church* must be held largely responsible for this service of the members.

These active duties, so far as the members of any particular church are concerned, should, for the most part, be directed by the minister and

elders thereof. At least, what is done by the people in any associated capacity, should be under their supervision. Sunday-schools, Bible-classes, and all other organizations of the congregation, having in view spiritual and benevolent objects for its good, and designed to reach the multitudes who are without, should be as much subject to their control as the Sabbath and week-day worship. And the officers ought not only to recognize their authority here, but to feel a responsibility for the proper and efficient working of all such agencies. They ought, moreover, to see that every member of the church is engaged in some proper spiritual service for Christ and the good of souls.

If they are "overseers of the flock," made such by the Holy Ghost and by the authority of the Head of the church, it is, confessedly, their duty to watch over all that relates to the spiritual interest and duties of the whole body. If, then, it be the duty of every member to labor in the Lord's vineyard, it is the duty of the rulers of Christ's kingdom to see that these labors are performed, and to direct the members in regard to them, as far as this may be necessary; just as clearly so, we think, as to counsel and encourage them, rebuke, warn, and exhort them, with reference to any delinquencies or duties relating to their strictly personal deportment. This, indeed, by the most explicit testimony, was the practice of the early church; and hence the reason why a large body of elders was ordained in each congregation. And if the whole body of members, in any church now, were so distributed as to place a portion under the direction of each elder in the discharge of these active duties, the entire membership and the entire eldership would be far more efficient, under such a system, than they now are under almost no system whatever.

There are many members in all our churches, now literally doing nothing—spiritually dwarfed through idleness—who would engage in this service if they knew what to do, and how, when, and where to do it. This is especially true of the young. They need counsel. Under the system indicated, they might become efficient helpers of all that is good. It is equally true that there are others who need counsel to prevent their doing injury. They are at work; but often, from inexperience, or an impetuous zeal, their works tend to mar rather than beautify the temple of God. How plainly do these things reveal the official responsibilities of the rulers in Christ's kingdom.

2. But while this service of the whole body should be directed by the proper officers, a *large latitude* should be given to bring out the *efficiency of individual characteristics*.

The present tendencies of the church, as of the age, are to action. It is an age of earnest labor, even in the church. This is hopeful. It is the great need. And we freely acknowledge a great advance in this direction, in the very duties here urged, during the present generation. In this we rejoice, and long for still greater advancement. The day of mere contemplative piety, we would hope, is gone forever. Men need, we admit, more grace, if possible, for a life of earnest, spiritual labors, than for a life of meditation and spiritual indolence. But let them cultivate piety in the closet, and engage in active service, too. They were intended to go together, the one as a preparation for the other.

These very tendencies of the age, we concede, will lead to some extravagance. Some men are so constituted that they are ever running to extremes. When brought to act in the best cause they are in danger of ruining it, and surely would if they had their way. It is their nature so to do. But still, for the sake of the greater efficiency, some latitude must be given to individual peculiarities. By no means repress activity, in any one. Rather encourage it, and seek to direct it. Even some extravagancies may be tolerated rather than have nothing done. It would be far better to be obliged to "put down the brakes," occasionally, under too high a pressure of steam, than to be always moving on at a snail-pace, or not moving at all. Almost anything is better than sterility, stagnation, and death, with souls perishing at our very doors, and no effort made to save them!

If the officers of the church fail in their duty either in regard to superintending or stimulating the members in theirs, let not the members feel excused on that account. Individual responsibility remains the same. Let every soul "work while it is day"—alone, even, if need be—and God will bless the work and give the reward.

3. But, as the grand necessity laid upon the church in God's providence, urging to this official supervision, and prompting the whole body to an active service, it is manifest, that unless the church become more and more alive to this, *her most effective force will be absorbed in other directions*, and she will be shorn of much of her power in the world.

Look at the course of many in regard to the so-called "reforms" of the age. Some of the foremost actors have left the church to engage in them, honestly aiming to do good to their fellow-men, and in the best way, according to their judgment, but carried, at length, in many cases, to every extreme of error in sentiment and practice. Why is this? Do you thank God for the riddance? Do you rejoice that they have left the church? It is, I think, poor cause for thankfulness, in the main.

With some exceptions, these men might have been retained; and with the training which the church might have given them, in the work she has committed to her, they would have been among her most effective forces. There is a place in the church, and a work for every soul, and enough work to absorb the time and energies of all these restless multitudes.

There are two classes of persons who leave the church to engage in schemes for the supposed moral and spiritual good of mankind. (1.) Those who from certain idiosyncrasies could not long remain in the church anywhere or under any system. They are but fulfilling their inevitable destiny when they leave it, and the church is better off when they go. (2.) There is another class, mostly among the young and ardent, who have a restless and laudable anxiety to be doing something for humanity, impelled by convictions of duty and the best feelings of the heart. They go out of the church because they find nothing to do in it; not that they necessarily leave her communion, but they go outside of her organization to do that work which Christ has committed to the church. They have had no training in the church for the Lord's service. It is but natural, indeed a moral necessity, that they should go elsewhere to satisfy the demands of their ardent and benevolent natures in this day of action.

But, if the church were fully doing her duty, there would be no need of this. In the divine economy, the church contemplates, in her design, organization, and true working, all the good, moral and spiritual, which man can receive, for the life that now is and the life that is to come. For these ends she is adapted and perfect. In carrying out her legitimate aims, she has scope for absorbing all the time, all the energies, all the sympathies, and all the money, which her members can bestow. Any portion of any of these which is abstracted from her and bestowed upon other organizations even of good character, is so much taken from what ought to be expended within and to go forth from the church herself, for her honor, and for the glory of her divine Head. When doing her whole duty and realizing her true ideal, she provides for the good of humanity in its highest sense, and for the highest good of man in every sense; and there is no need of any other organization through which her members shall aim to bless and save the world. There is, therefore, no need that any of her members should go beyond her pale to do good to men, except that which arises from her own culpable failure to meet her Lord's demands upon her.

This is the divine economy regarding the church. If in our hands

she came fully up to her scriptural *model of action*, or anywhere near it, we should not see so much effective force withdrawn from her midst, expending itself elsewhere, and bringing reproach upon the church for her inefficiency.

As the best illustration of my meaning—and I refer to it only for this purpose—look at the “Young Men’s Christian Association,” an institution which is fast becoming a power in the land, whose rapid growth, whose wide extension, and some of whose supposed aims, have excited the fears of some good men, in that it brings the lay element in the church into too much prominence, to the disparagement of the ministry, and in that it tends, in some quarters, as they believe, to a position antagonistic to the church.

This institution originated in the city of London, and arose out of the very necessity I have mentioned—large masses of the people, the most ignorant and degraded, not being reached by the gospel through any operations of the church, the most of whose members were inactive, and the condition of these masses strongly appealing to the benevolent sympathies of those who were willing to make an effort to rescue them, by any means in their power. I would not say a word against so laudable an institution, now extending throughout our country and embracing many good objects. So far as it may have a mission to perform I would bid it good speed. This may be said, however, with certainty. If it shall take a position openly antagonistic to the church, of which I have no special fears, its mission for good is ended. The church, whatever may be its defects, is of God. That institution, and all similar voluntary organizations, whatever may be their excellencies, are of man. The church, with her ordinances, springing from the divine wisdom, will stand through all the generations of time, a refuge for all men. Other schemes for man’s good, arising from supposed exigencies, come up, generation after generation, and again pass away.

But I refer to the “Young Men’s Christian Association” as an example, simply because it has in it a lesson of instruction for the church. It is an outgrowth of the active piety of the church, prompted by an earnest desire to do good to mankind. It takes this particular direction, because the church is practically deficient in employing these activities within her pale, or under her supervision, and because she does not herself organize and employ this force for the work lying outside of her present range of operations. This Association embraces largely, in many communities, what might be the most effective force of the church. It embodies some of the best elements in our congregations.

Now, why should not all this active zeal for good to the world, in every proper form, and for every laudable end, be employed and directed by the church, as the Divine Head thereof demands? It might be, if the church would do her duty. And can those who have "doubted of them whereunto this would grow," more effectively and speedily dispel their fears, than by aiding the church to come up, with all her officers and all her members, as the heart of one man, "to the help of the Lord against the mighty," thus exemplifying the real genius and true spirit of our common Christianity?

We may rest assured that this must be done by the church at large, *or it will be left behind*, in this day of earnest labor, by many of the worthy of her membership, and even by men of the world, in their schemes to do good to mankind. We, as a denomination, our elders, and our people, must more fully awake to this, or "*Ichabod*" will be written over the doorway of the temple of the Lord!

I come to notice, in conclusion,

IV. The RESULTS likely to flow from the full discharge of this duty by the church at large, in their bearing upon the conversion of the world.

As to the "conversion of *the world*," it respects the conversion of men *at home and abroad*—all classes, everywhere. And nothing, it would seem, is more directly calculated to lead to this, than the arousing and engaging of the whole church—every member—in direct, personal labors and prayers for this end, as commanded in the gospel. And this for every reason.

1. Among the most obvious of these reasons, is, that such a consecration *would secure the divine blessing in an extraordinary manner*.

This is always, and everywhere, the grand necessity. Truth is powerless to save, without the Spirit of God. All efforts are vain without this—all devotion worthless. But the realization of the promise of the Spirit to the church, depends upon the discharge of her duties in the proper and earnest use of all the means of grace. There shall be seen, in the last days, such mighty outpourings of the Spirit, as shall result in bringing men to Christ in far greater numbers than have ever been known. But the promises for this are closely connected with extraordinary efforts to be made by the church for this end. Whenever the church is ready to make this consecration, God will confirm the truth of his word. And, in order to stimulate our faith, and encourage our labors, has he not been showing, in an unusual manner, within the

last two years, what cheering results will always attend increased prayer and effort?

We may, therefore, regard it as a settled principle of the gospel economy, that increased devotion on the part of the church, in the direct line of God's ordinances, will always secure more enlarged blessings of his grace. If, then, the duty of the church at large, as set forth in this discourse, is truly enjoined of God, its full discharge by the whole body of the people would insure the divine blessing, in measure and extent in accordance with this universal consecration. It would bring down the Holy Spirit in a Pentecostal effusion, to accompany these labors. Men would be brought to Christ in such multitudes as have never been known in the church since the apostolic era, when such labors *were* performed by *all* the disciples.

And we may say, furthermore, with perfect truth, that, if this service is among the agencies especially devised by the Lord for bringing the world to Christ, it is preposterous to expect that great numbers will be reached and saved, while this instrumentality is so extensively unemployed. God will not grant great blessings when so important an agency in his plan is completely set aside.

2. If the church would come fully up to her duty in this regard, it would have the most powerful effect *to convince the unbelieving world that Christianity is of God.*

We can see, in her present position of comparative inaction, why it is that the church has not greater power over the masses of the people, of all ranks and beliefs, as well as of no belief. They see absolutely no interest expressed, by the great body who compose the church, for their welfare. There is little or no sympathy manifested between the church at large, so far as the vast majority of her membership is concerned, and the various classes that make up the unconverted world. Religion is a subject generally ignored in all their business and social relations. It does not enter into their conversation, their habits, or plans of life. Only here and there do the world see the laborers at work in the vineyard.

The men of the world are shrewd in their perceptions of what belongs to a true Christian life. Professing Christians are "epistles," and whether "living" or "dead," are "known and read of all men," far more closely than they read their Bibles. They pronounce much of this profession hypocrisy. It consoles them in unbelief. It leads to scepticism and infidelity. It is among the strongest barriers, with perishing millions, to their acceptance of the gospel. They cannot believe that the church

seriously thinks they are going down to hell, and yet manifests so little concern for their salvation !

Now, we may decry this conduct of the world as we please. We may say this reasoning is illogical, and the conclusion absurd. We may declare that, though it be conceded that many in the church are hypocrites, yet Christianity is true, and these excuses cannot save men. We may insist, that, while on the one hand the duty of this full consecration, as here presented, is the true theory, and exhibits the real spirit of practical Christianity, and should therefore be exemplified in the conduct of every member of the church, yet, on the other hand, the scriptures everywhere just as clearly recognize, that, in fact, many in the church do not come up to this standard—never have, and never will : so that, instead of this want of zeal and interest in the world's salvation, exhibited by many, being a reason for rejecting the gospel as a fable, it furnishes one of the strong arguments for its truth, and shows the shallowness of a canting infidelity. We may say to the world—though the whole church go to hell, this will not raise one soul to heaven ! We may urge all these considerations with perfect truth, and still the lamentable fact will remain the same, that, while the church, as a body, exhibit so little personal concern and put forth so little personal labor to save sinners around them, multitudes will make these things a reason for their unbelief, and will go down to endless woe !

There is nothing which can effectually break in upon this state of the common mind but a revolution in the activity of the church. But let this revolution begin, and reach to every member : let it be manifested by making an active zeal the settled habit of the life ; let the true spirit of primitive devotion be exhibited, which brought together the whole church, morning and evening, for daily prayer and counsel, during nearly the first two hundred years of the Christian era, and which led every man and woman to do *something* directly aimed to bring souls to Christ ; let this spirit be awakened, and such labors be prosecuted but for one twelvemonth throughout this broad land of ours, so that the world beholding this advance movement of the church would be afraid to be left behind, and instead of the few thousands now annually gathered into the church, the entire population would be moved to inquire, as of old,—“Men and brethren, what shall we do ?”

3. Such a spectacle as this observed at home, would have the most *powerful effect upon the heathen world.*

It would give an impulse to every department of the missionary work abroad, which no other agency of the church could. The turning of the

multitudes at home to Christ—which would surely attend such a consecration—would be followed by heathen nations being “born in a day.”

That recommendation which came from a small band of brethren of the Lodiaua Mission, for a world's concert of prayer for one week, observed last January so extensively, was the beginning of a work which brought salvation to many in our congregations, and spread wide the wave of revival influences through the land. When the news of these blessed results shall have reached every mission station on heathen ground, what cheering news may we not expect to hear in return—in the encouragement given to the missionaries in all their labors, and in its effect upon the heathen mind. *Most clearly, the state of the missionary work abroad depends upon the state of the church at home.* This is universally granted. Can we, then, do a better service for the heathen, than by endeavoring to bring the entire church at home up to the true standard of her duty?

Let but the spirit of prayer and labor, thus sought to be awakened, be cultivated by all Christians, and such a consecration be made *by the whole church* as Christ demands, and its influence would be speedily felt upon every country of the heathen world, and the millennium would be at our very doors!

Brethren of the Ministry and of the Eldership, in this General Assembly! rest assured that this is *the great duty* devolving upon us as Teachers and Rulers in the house of God, regarding the conversion of the world. It is to bring *the whole people*—men, women and children, every one—*up to the gospel standard of Christian activity and consecration.* Our *determination*, in this regard, should be like that of the prophet of old: “For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth!”

FINIS.

